

News Release



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More than \$19 Million in Wetlands Grants and Acquisitions Approved

\$1 Million Will Benefit Migratory Waterfowl and Nine Listed Species in Southern Idaho's Great Basin

The Migratory Bird Conservation Commission has approved more than \$19 million in grants aimed at protecting and restoring more than 135,000 acres of wetlands and wildlife habitat in the United States and Mexico. The Commission awarded the grants under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) at its March 10 meeting in Washington, D.C.

The Commission also approved more than \$800,000 to add more than 1,353 wetland acres to two units of the National Wildlife Refuge System administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to secure breeding, resting, and feeding habitat. These acquisitions include 1,315 acres to provide habitat for waterfowl at the San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge in Matagorda County, Texas; and 38 acres of habitat to protect, restore and maintain wetlands for waterfowl and other migratory birds at the North Central Valley Wildlife Management Area, in Butte County, California.

The Commission includes Senators Thad Cochran of Mississippi and Blanche Lincoln of Arkansas, Congressmen John Dingell of Michigan and Robert Wittman of Virginia, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa P. Jackson, as well as state representatives as ex officio members who vote on projects located within their respective states.

More than \$19.5 million in NAWCA grant funds go towards support of 20 projects in 15 states, with partners contributing an additional \$63.6 million in matching funds to help protect, restore and enhance nearly 136,000 acres.

In Idaho, the 2,221- acre Middle Snake River Conservation Project will receive \$1 million to protect and improve key wetland, riparian and upland habitats in a watershed that will build upon local and regional efforts to benefit important bird, fish and wildlife species. The project includes leasing and purchasing conservation easements of more than 1,700 acres of private and public land. This land includes important wetlands adjacent to the Snake River in Hagerman Valley. Another nearly 300 acres of emergent and forested wetland habitat will be restored and the remaining 500 acres of critical wetland and riparian habitat on private lands, the Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge and four Idaho Wildlife Management Areas will be enhanced to support a diverse mixture of habitats for migratory bird species, waterfowl, shorebirds and nine federally listed species. The listed species include five endangered Snake River mollusks, Canada lynx, yellow-billed cuckoo and the Columbia spotted frog. Partners are contributing \$6.5 million to the effort.

Nearly \$3 million for 11 projects will help protect 2,470 acres of habitat in Mexico, with partners contributing an additional \$8.1 million to those projects. The grants were awarded under NAWCA's U.S. Standard Grants and Mexico Grants Programs administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, a Department of the Interior agency. The grants are funded by annual Congressional appropriations; fines, penalties and forfeitures levied under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act; interest accrued on funds under the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act; and excise taxes paid on small engine fuels through the Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Fund.

Passed in 1989, NAWCA provides matching grants to organizations and individuals who have developed partnerships to carry out wetlands conservation projects in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. The Act was passed in part to support activities associated with the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, an international agreement providing a strategy for the long-term protection of wetlands and associated upland habitats vital to waterfowl and other migratory birds in North America.

More information on NAWCA grant programs and the NAWCA projects approved today is available on the Web at: <http://www.fws.gov/birdhabitat/grants/NAWCA/index.shtm>

The Refuge acquisitions are funded through sources including import duties collected on arms and ammunition and sales of the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, otherwise known as the Federal Duck Stamp. The stamp features the winner of the annual Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest. This year's Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest – the nation's only federally sponsored annual art competition – will be held October 15 and 16 at the David Brower Center in Berkeley, California. The winning art will be made into the 2011-2012 Federal Duck Stamp, which sells for \$15.

Additional information about the history on the ongoing efforts to conserve North America's wetlands and waterfowl can be found at Flyways.us. The website provides waterfowl enthusiasts, biologists and agency administrators with the most up-to-date waterfowl habitat and waterfowl population information.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov

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